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Approach to Cuba: What Next?

By Bertram H. Johnson

Latin America Writer at The Christian Science Monitor

Now that the Algerian crisis for France and the Western powers has subsided, the question of future United States policy in Cuba still faces the Kennedy administration.

Cuban policy alternatives stretch all the way from the thesis that the United States should reverse its policy, restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, lift the sugar and other embargoes, and generally come to terms with Cuba, to the other end of the spectrum—possibly taking direct military action against the Castro government.

Both policies are held to be the extremes of action. Negotiation with Cuba has been found to be impossible ever since the early days of the Castro government, though the Cuban Government has given lip service to the possibility of talks.

As far back as February, 1959, the second month of the Castro government's assumption of power,

both Premier Castro and Maj. Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Marxist economic chief of Cuba, persistently and with hostility, refused to consider even the most generous offer of United States aid and cooperation. Even United States schemes to help Cuba pay off compensation on expropriated lands were turned aside. It can be reliably reported.

Soviet Promise

Direct military action against Cuba by United States troops is seen as the last desperate possibility, if all else should fail. The reactions throughout the hemisphere and the world might be too much for the United States to withstand, unless further provocation by the Cuban and Soviet Governments should more clearly justify military action for purposes of protecting United States security.

Soviet strategy is evident in the statements made by Soviet

Deputy Foreign Minister Valerian A. Zorin at the United Nations Wednesday. He said the Soviet Union would be prepared to help Cuba against attack.

He added the hope that President Kennedy's investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency will lead to complete liquidation of the aggressive acts which the CIA fostered, prepared, and in the case of Cuba, carried out.

In this connection, it is more and more evident today that CIA support for conservative groups or rebel insurgents and the hunting aside or disinclination to support more liberal elements of the anti-Castro groups may well have been responsible for the heavy and eventual debacle in last week's unsuccessful Cuban landings.

The tactlessness and lack of consideration for Latin American sensibilities shown by some CIA agents in looking up several of the top Revolutionary Council insurgent leaders in a house somewhere in Florida is difficult to comprehend. Especially since they were allowed no telephone, held against their wishes (for security reasons, it was said) and could give no orders.

Sanctions Possible?

A pattern for United States strategy may be evident in Cuba's being read out Wednesday of secret sessions of the Inter-American Defense Board. The board is a military group that meets in Washington every week or two to plan defense strategy for the Western Hemisphere.

The resolution against Cuba is a temporary one, specifying that the Cuban delegation be denied access to secret sessions and classified documents of the board "as long as there exists the present evident alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union."

The vote failed 12 to 1 against Cuba. Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile abstained, and Brazil reserved its vote. Three other countries were absent.

From a hemisphere point of view, the most temperate steps the United States could take at this time would be to attempt to convince members of the Organization of American States to introduce sanctions against Cuba.

Reversal Move

In the past few days, the Kennedy administration has begun taking active steps in the direction of reversing the OAS to call a foreign ministers consultative conference by informing Latin American embassies in Washington of the United States detailed position on Cuba and inquiring from Latin American governments where they now stand.

The United States would not want to participate in a foreign ministers conference, however, unless it can be sure that support for at least diplomatic and economic if not military sanctions against Cuba would be forthcoming.

There is the possibility that an arms embargo may be clamped on the Caribbean through OAS action. The Committee for Political Defense of the Hemisphere might be re-established. This committee would be re-assigned to check on Communist subversion in the hemisphere.

Although the OAS is not essentially equipped to deal with extrahemisphere (in this case, Communist) subversion in the hemisphere, there is the outside possibility that growing anti-Castro sentiment in Latin America—now spreading more rapidly than anti-United States feeling—may crystallize sharply.

Eight Sever Ties

There is little likelihood the United States could propose anti-Cuban action at the scheduled May 24 Eleventh Inter-American Conference at Quito, Ecuador, which may possibly be postponed because of the Cuban crisis. But if a foreign ministers consultative meeting were to be held, it is possible enough sentiment against Cuba would take tangible form—in diplomatic, economic, and military sanctions in that order.

Thus far, eight of the 21 OAS countries have broken relations with Cuba—El Salvador, Peru, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic (though diplomatic sanctions have been applied against the Dominican dictatorship) and the United States.

Even diplomatic and economic sanctions are seen to be of some quarantine value against Cuba.

A diplomatic embargo would close down Cuban embassies in Latin American countries through which the Castro government has been operating with spies and agents against constitutional governments.

If there is any effective empathy between Afro-Asian countries in the United Nations, anti-Castro, diplomatic sanctions by the Latin republics against Cuba could make an impression. Those who believe this are impressed that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India has softened his original criticism of the United States support of anti-Castro insurgents.